



Press release

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ALARMS SOUND AT ABCDF FOLLOWING POWER OUTAGE

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Workers at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility evacuated the facility Wednesday afternoon when there was an electrical power outage and an alarm sounded the presence of mustard agent vapor in the facility's neutralization bay.

Two ABCDF employees were performing maintenance in the neutralization bay when the power outage occurred at 12:10 p.m. Both workers were wearing complete protective gear with self-contained breathing apparatus, as required, to protect against potential agent contamination. The two employees exited the bay and left the building. At the sound of the alarm, workers who were outside the maintenance area, and thus, not required to wear full protective equipment, put on their masks and evacuated the area, in accordance with established procedure. No employees have exhibited symptoms of agent exposure.

Analysis of the building's monitoring system indicated low levels of agent were present in areas immediately adjacent to the neutralization bay, but all within the confines of engineering controls.

At the time of the electric power failure, power was transferred to a backup generator within seconds, according to design. The facility operated on the generator until 4:40 p.m., when electrical power was restored to the site. All systems, including ventilation, remained functional throughout this timeframe. The staff conducted a routine, systematic transfer of the building's electrical systems from the generator to the electric power system.

A second power loss was experienced at 10 p.m. that night; however, no alarms sounded during the second power outage. Army and contractor personnel are working to identify what caused the presence of the mustard vapor and the electrical outages. Neutralization and other agent operations will resume once stability of electrical power is restored.

Personnel from the facility emphasized that, while the incident initially was characterized as a mustard spill, there was no mustard spill.

Additional information will be released, as it is available.

Since disposal operations began at the facility on April 23, a total of 16 containers have been drained. More than 1,000 gallons of mustard agent have been neutralized.